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# United States Submarine Chasers

By  
Hilary Ranald Chambers, Jr.



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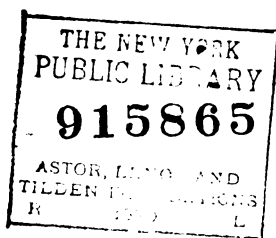


**United States**  
**Submarine Chasers**  
**in**  
**The Mediterranean, Adriatic**  
**and**  
**The Attack on Durazzo**

**By**  
**Hilary Ranald Chambers, Jr.**  
**Lieutenant (J. G.), United States Naval Reserve Force,**  
**Commanding Officer of U. S. S. C. No. 128; and**  
**Executive Officer of U. S. S. C. No. 215**

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**BY**  
**HILARY RANALD CHAMBERS, JR.**

**This story of my experiences and feelings I wish to dedicate to my beloved family whose love and advice have ever been a help to me both in and out of the service.**

**1 Coxswain**  
**3 Listeners**  
**1 Cook**  
**1 Mess attendant**  
**5 Seamen**

**The chasers are 110 feet over all with 15 feet beam.**

**Their average draught is 5 1/2 feet.**

**Their average speed 15 knots.**

**Gasoline consumption at full speed about 50  
gallons hourly.**

**By a large majority the chasers were manned and  
officered by U. S. N. R. F.**



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# United States Submarine Chasers

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## CHAPTER I

### SUBMARINE CHASERS

IN the early part of 1918 there were two large submarine chaser bases on our Atlantic Coast; one was at Charleston, S. C., and the other at New London, Conn.

The one-hundred-and-ten-foot boat built by private shipyards as well as in some of the largest U. S. Navy yards was the result of the next step taken in purely offensive submarine work after the seventy- and eighty-foot type of boats turned over to the Allied governments. The British contract for small eighty-foot motor launches (M.L.'s is the name they go by) was extensive, but after they had been given a fair trial, before we entered the war, the one-hundred-and-ten-footers were considered

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nearer the ideal. Their cost was small in comparison with the steel destroyer class, and large numbers could be put out in a short time, owing to the fact that almost any private pleasure-boat concern could accommodate them on their ways.

The United States submarine chasers are wooden vessels, 110 feet long, supported by steel bulkheads and one fore and aft steel beam. Starting from the bow aft, they are divided into a fore-peak used as a paint locker and stowage space for lines and other deck gear; then comes the crew's head and forecastle, berthing twelve men, three to a side, in two tiers. Beneath the forecastle deck most chasers have built a coal bunker aft of the chain locker, and then there are two water tanks of six hundred gallons capacity. In the center of the forecastle is a folding mess table, and two thirds of the way aft a coal-fed stove which supplies a hot-water heating system for the entire ship. Next to the after bulkhead is a sink and water pump with dish racks above. There is also a ventilation system run by electric fans from the engine room.

The next compartment is the magazine. Most all of the ammunition is stowed below this deck, and there are two bunks, one on each side, built for the extra war complement. Amidships are the listening devices. These are the S. C. and M. B. tubes. They are inverted T's with ears at each end of the horizontal. Sound is transmitted to

these ears from the water and follow tubing to the listener, who wears a stethoscope head apparatus. When this lower part is turned perpendicularly to the bearing of the sound, the noise is transmitted binorally, of the same intensity in each ear, or centered.

Aft of this magazine comes a compartment divided into three sections by light wooden bulkheads. Forward on the starboard side is the wireless room, in which are installed the wireless telegraph and telephone and the operator's bunk; on the other side is the officers' wash room, and behind these two compartments their sleeping quarters.

A steel water-tight bulkhead separates the officers' quarters from the engine room, theoretically; actually its main use seems to be to prevent passageway. The holes drilled along the sides for engine annunciators allow streaks of light to fall on the pillows of the bunks, especially early in the morning. When under way the gas fumes come through the bulkhead as readily as they do through the deck ventilators, and it is often a question in the officers' minds whether they should not change their service records from deck to engineering duties. The engine room itself is a beautiful example of compactness. There are three main engines of 220 horse-power each, Standard make. These are started by compressed air generated by a 20 horse-power auxiliary, and stored in three metal

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tanks under pressure of 250 pounds. This auxiliary also drives a generator which supplies two sets of batteries of six cells each, used for lighting, telephone, and numerous other things. Bilges are pumped by the auxiliary power; also water for scrubbing down decks and in case of fire. This engine is the most overworked piece of machinery aboard, and being of nasty temper, becomes obstinate very often. The gasoline for these engines is supplied from tanks of 2400-gallon capacity placed under the officers' quarters.

The after magazine used for storing depth bombs comes next, in which are also two 150-gallon water tanks, followed by the engineers' or black gang quarters, and a compartment with a folding mess table, commonly designated as mess hall. There are four folding bunks in each of these last named quarters. We then have the galley, fitted with a small coal stove, sink, a couple of drawers, a small ice box and coal bunker. A wooden bulkhead separates this from the lazaret, a compartment for storing dry provisions. Lazarets are generally filled with water in this type of craft, and the wooden bulkhead acts as an admirable filter.

On the topside, or deck forward, we have the anchor davit with two anchors of 150 and 250 pounds. Also a small V-shaped breakwater two feet high. Behind this is mounted an anti-aircraft 3-inch, 23-caliber gun with open sights, elevated

by wheel and worm gear, and trained by shoulder movement. If this gun were fired with all windows of the chart house closed, from the concussion an entire new set of glasses would be required. The chart house sets on a deck raised two feet. This is the commanding officer's station. In one corner he has the three engine annunciators, wireless telephone receiver, dial plotting instrument, bell to engine room, general quarters' alarm, speaking tubes fore and aft and to the bridge and crow's nest. There is also built a lighting arrangement so that he can read detailed instructions from the senior ship while operating all other contrivances, as well as giving steering directions and watching that his boat does not go astray. Amidships there is one wherry put overboard by a boom and tackle. Directly over the black gang quarters is the Y-gun, a device which, by the explosion of black powder, throws a depth bomb of 350 pounds of TNT approximately sixty yards on both sides of the ship. On the stern are three parallel bomb racks built on an angle so that the bombs resting on them can be dropped over the stern by either pulling a toggle or cutting a lashing. There are also two large drums of copper wire that can be trailed over the stern. By means of an electric attachment a bell rings in the chart house when this wire comes in contact with the metal of a submarine lying on the bottom.

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On top of the chart house is a pelorus, arrow, searchlight, and blinker key. There is a crow's nest ten feet above this on the mast. Four separate halyards for hoists run from the bridge to the yards, making it easy to carry out complicated systems of signals.

The above described 110-foot submarine chasers began to go into commission about December, 1917, and by the end of March, 1918, a sufficient number had been equipped with the latest listening devices, wireless telephones, and Y-guns to warrant sending them to the other side. A number were turned over to the French, and by the middle of April submarine chasers began to arrive at Bermuda from both New London and Charleston.



## CHAPTER II

### NEW LONDON

At New London the State pier was the base for these little motor boats. As soon as they had been equipped, the training of the men began. Each week day morning the officers and crews were assembled in a large room on the "second deck" of the pier, as it was nautically termed, and submarine exercises were gone through. Along one side of the room were placed three miniature wooden masts with yards and signal halyards, representing chasers, and a pelorus for taking bearings was sometimes used; at other times the bearing of a wooden submarine out on the deck was reported in points relative to the imaginary ship. At the center station representing the flagship were placed the plotting devices. These consisted of movable dials with three movable arms. Reports of the submarine bearing came from each of the three ships to the officer who was handling the plotting instrument. He adjusted the arms in accordance with the reports,

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and knowing the distance between ships he got what is called a "fix" of the submarine where the arms met. These movable arms were proportioned relative to the distance between ships, and he could read the distance and bearing of the submarine on the instrument. At the same time, another officer on the flagship plotted the bearings and got his "fix" on squared paper. Two successive "fixes," and the time between, determined the submarine's course and speed.

At each station representing a chaser was a lookout who gave the bearing to the captain who under actual conditions would transmit it by telephone or arrow, also there was a signalman who hoisted various shapes on the miniature halyards designating the compass bearing on which the line of advance was to be.

There was also much drill at arrow reading. The arrow is a large colored representation of the Redman's missile, mounted so that it can be pointed for 360 degrees in both the vertical and horizontal planes. Should there be no other way of sending bearings, courses, etc., to the other ships of the unit, the arrow was to be used. Drill at reading the instrument was carried on daily, and practically all became able to read within five to ten degrees. There was much signal practice, and the good old navy Swedish exercises were seldom forgotten. In this way on the State pier

the wooden submarine was chased and its actions plotted for hours.

In the afternoon, units practiced just outside the harbor by chasing one of our own submarines, both on the surface and submerged. If a submarine was not available another chaser answered the purpose as a noise maker to give the listeners practice. When finally a number of boats and crews were thought to be sufficiently equipped and trained they were sent down to Bermuda under convoy of ocean-going tugs or battleships. The first detachment left about March 20th, and the second at the end of the month.

In this second detachment was a division of six chasers all built at the Norfolk Navy Yard, numbered 124 to 129 inclusive. The 124 was commanded by Mr. Kelly ("Red"), Lieutenant (J. G.), who was the only regular naval officer in the division. All the other officers were Reserves, and their only experience of this character was the trip from Norfolk, Va., to New London, Conn., and since that trip they had become firmly in sympathy with the expression of a certain four striper (naval captain) on board one of our battleships, who, when told the Reserves admitted their experience, or rather lack of it, said, "Well, may God help them."

As the time for the departure of the chasers drew near, an undercurrent of excitement could be felt

by everyone. Last messages couched in the most ambiguous and mysterious terms puzzled the idle telephone and telegraph operators. Packages of tooth powder, chewing gum, cigarettes, and what not were hurriedly procured and carried under the eyes of the deck guards. The navy supply department was made to do double time to meet the *absolutely necessary* requisitions. The storekeepers had to sleep with one eye open on their supplies lest some mysteriously disappear. The officers of the personnel department had to hurry from luxurious repasts at the Mohican Hotel to attend to the transfer of men to complete complements. It was indeed a rush!

On the day before sailing all commanding officers were summoned on board the U. S. S. *Salem*, which was the senior ship, for instructions. Printed orders were issued to each boat and the details of the trip gone over.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

At last, at six o'clock on the evening of March 31, 1918, the convoy got under way, and started out of the harbor.

The following is a letter from a commanding officer describing this departure:

"When we left the States we were under the protection of a battleship, and the Senior Officer was under the impression that before the trip came to an end he would have to hoist us to the deck of his ship to keep us from straying from under his wing. He explained very fully the awful consequences of not doing exactly as ordered; and directed that at the least trouble to call on his mighty war vessel for assistance. He said that of course he knew we were inexperienced and he did not look for us to come up to the mark of efficiency that was expected of his fleet, but he was very glad of this opportunity to take the group of chasers to their destination. Sort of doing his bit for the U. S. However, we all knew he secretly cursed the Navy

Department for giving him a *bunch of kids with their motor boats* to keep track of.

"We finally shoved off from State pier with the usual delay of twenty-four hours, and outside the harbor took our formation in column, distance of one hundred yards between boats. There were twenty boats in all, and after the air in our whistles had been exhausted blowing to one another, we got under way. As the battleship was passing the small island about seven miles from port, the captain bethought himself to look and see how things were. It must have been an inspiring sight! Efficiency personified! The chasers made a most symmetrical series of S's, only a couple of breaks now and then as all beginners must have, and all boats out of the harbor except one which was disentangling itself from an argument with a harbor tug which had not recognized the self-asserted right of way of this newly made man of war. A pretty good start, we all thought. The column was only eight miles long. However, we later found our captain did not share our opinion. We all were very 'salty' and 'rolled' fore and aft along the deck instead of walking. We were pretty much at home on the seas, and talked of the seaworthiness of our boats, how we would like to try them out, and such other stuff of a like sort, until we struck the Gulf Stream the next day.

"In this area a big sea was running and the waves

seemed to be as high as our mast. The directions as taught in school ashore, when the ocean is merely a conception of the imagination to most of the students, are to run down the side of the wave and with a sort of scenic railway effect shoot up the next. We found the chasers were just like corks in the sea, and corks can't be steered down one side; they just drop, and so did we. The fact that they were small and light with a flaring buoyant bow kept them from sticking their noses too far under. Plenty of green water was taken over decks for us beginners, however.

"Do you know the Gulf Stream is different from any other stream? Instead of flowing on a horizontal plane, it flows vertically up in some places and then nearly always comes down again. It often goes straight up and then straight down, a most disturbing sensation, because the boat invariably follows it. She rolls first to one side to clean off the starboard deck (of dirt or people), then to the other side to catch those who have crossed over. This motion would be fine for reducing. The crew, would you believe it, really forgot meals, and it was the only time ever heard of when they seemed more interested in sea views than having 'chow.'"

During the run to Bermuda the paint burning on the outside of the engines gave forth a most unsavory odor. It penetrated the water-tight bulk-

heads and was most evident everywhere on the boat except in the galley. In the galley this smell had to contend with that more pungent one of burning food, caused by a cook who, in the midst of keeping a pot of stew in its conventional position, became suddenly interested in gazing fixedly over the ship's side; although it was said that he was seen at this particular time often with his eyes tightly shut. Later on, we found the cook was not at all dependable. He took to lying around anywhere he happened to drop. It was not discovered who started this little sick game, but all the deck force except four and two of the engine room gang played it for some time at least during that trip. All the men, however, though each time they thought and often hoped, it would be their last hour alive, stood their watch. The culinary results were very unsettled, and it was a case of charity, if those who could not cook for themselves ate at all. However, the quartermaster, gunner's mate, and two seamen proved to know something of cooking, and mainly through their efforts such delicacies as fried eggs or burned sausages were added to the bread, coffee, and "canned bill" diet. Is it a wonder the interest in keeping position in the convoy waned until brusquely revived by unsympathetic reminders signaled from the senior ship?

One night when personal attention to the ship's position was diverted owing to seasickness, it



was discovered at sunrise that the rest of the chasers had disappeared over the horizon towards Bermuda. After a somewhat heated interview with the chief of the engine room, it was found that the water had risen above the floor plates in that compartment and seriously endangered any further move. How it got there, where it came from (though that was evident enough—the ocean), or what to do, had made no apparent impression on anyone supposedly responsible. It seemed of little consequence to them that the entire convoy should turn and come back for this one chaser, or worse, not come back at all. It was suggested by some one in authority that pumps be used. This met the approval of all. The water was pumped out and the engines started again just as the mother ship showed up on the horizon looking for her lost chick.

The system of signaling at sea between ships is generally by flag hoists. A ship wishing to send a message will hoist flags designating the desired ship's call number. When the call is seen the designated ship runs up the answering pennant. The message is then sent either by flags whose meaning alone or in combination is gotten from code books, or by semaphore method, angles of flags or arms standing for letters, or by dot and dash code, a combination of left and right dips, also alphabetical designations. If the signal is understood the answering pennant is hauled down.

If the pennant is not lowered the message must be repeated. It is distinctly to both ships' discredit to require repetition. At night messages are transmitted by blinker system, a combination of long and short flashes of light according to the code used.

Each noon the latitude, longitude, and fuel reports were signaled the mother ship. During the first few days the greatest diversity of opinion existed between chasers only two hundred yards apart in regard to their position. It was noticeable that some of the chasers in giving their latitude and longitude always agreed with one of the leading sea-going tugs, which tug generally, in fact always, got its hoists up before these chasers.

One night the 127 had a fire in her forepeak and the 128 stayed close by her at fire quarters, giving her the aid of another searchlight. The fire proved of no importance except as illustrating the fact that damp rubbers and waste make a dangerous combination when in a confined space.

## CHAPTER IV

### BERMUDA

WHEN about three hundred miles off Bermuda a red buoy was reported, "sighted," as entrance to the channel. Everyone was delighted except the navigator, who figured himself over and over again as three hundred miles out. He alone of the ship's crew was happy when the red buoy turned out to be a rising star. After the Gulf Stream had been passed the weather became very balmy, and at last the green hills of Bermuda came plainly in sight. A pilot boat was met and formation changed into column, and we proceeded into the swept channel skirting the coast of the island for about ten miles. It was a wonderful sight that met our eyes as we steamed along. The bright sunlight made the water a peculiar bluish green, and then beyond stretched the yellow beach with archy caverns, and above them the fresh-looking green grass dotted with pure white houses and intersected with white paths and roads, and crowning it all, a cloudless azure sky. With this

in sight we passed mile after mile. Was it a wonder we admired the view? There was something on which we could stand upright without holding on, and where we would not be worried internally eternally. We passed three chasers anchored close to shore, and they seemed almost too desirably peaceful after our continuous pitching and rolling. We reached His Majesty's Navy Yard and everything was so white that it had the appearance of just having been scrubbed. The water was clean and transparent, as the British forbid even bilge pumping in this Queen's basin, as it is called. The harbor is a sort of rectangle about one mile long by an eighth of a mile wide, and protected on the ocean side by breakwaters. Here we found tiers of chasers had preceded us. There were some French but mostly American, and numbers of English ships and boats of all kinds and sizes. There were enormous offices and supply buildings along the water front, but set back a convenient distance for yard work. After tying up beside our sister chasers, we immediately went aboard them to get information as to liberty. About shore liberty is the first question always asked when port is reached after a cruise, and after our trip one could not well imagine a more desirable thing. Here we bathed and a few conscientious ones looked up supplies. It was learned that a chaser was sent each day to Hamil-

ton, the only town at that end of the island. Overnight liberty was allowed, and only those on duty and those that got trampled on by the mob failed to board the next chaser to Hamilton.

There was a ten-day stay here during which time everything was overhauled and examined, for our next run was to be of twelve days. Some chasers needing it were put in dry dock. Supplies were procured, not at the navy yard but at an American base on a nearby island, where storehouses had been built and there were large caves for the storage of gasoline. The heat here was so intense that the liquid which was in the five-gallon tins would expand and break the receptacles if not protected.

The storekeepers had had experience with navy men and knew what precautions had to be taken to keep idle hands out of mischief. A working party was sent to one of these supply sheds to fill a requisition. The storekeeper read the number of the chaser and then looked at the men. "You people stay right outside there, I'll get your stuff for you," he said. This remark appeared so uncalled for, that to the last man their faces showed "hurt" at this inference of distrust. Nature assumed sway in their minds and it was determined to get even. When they returned to the ship they had the articles requisitioned but also two pelorus stands of the value of one hundred and fifty dollars,

but absolutely of no use whatever to the chaser as they were, or when taken to pieces. The men were sent back with these useless though valuable articles. The storeman, never considering his monthly inventory, refused to receive them, as by so doing he would admit their putting it over on him. An officer finally had to be sent to settle the matter; then the storeman received the stands but gave a receipt for them.

On long trips the water supply was not sufficient to allow the usual consumption for scrubbing clothes and galley uses. The crew understood this and instituted what was called a "Kangaroo Court." The first mandates of this court were issued on this trip. It was ordered that no washing of clothes or persons should occur during the voyage. The orders were carried out, as infringement called down the wrath of the court which was composed of the most eminent and largest-muscled men of the crew. Although this first edict was a bit stringent, the "Kangaroo Court" developed into a most worthy institution. During the early stages of its existence the anchor watch failed to keep up the forecastle fire at night, thereby causing the crew the unpleasantness of stepping from their bunks onto the cold, damp deck in the morning. After a trial before the court the offender was sentenced to the duty for one month of cleaning up after the puppy dog, the mascot

and pet of the crew. His rest depended upon the dog's condition, for at the merest excuse he would be roused from nightly slumber to perform the details his sentence imposed. This court saved the officers many disagreeable duties that were for the good of the crew, such as the cleanliness of the men's mess gear, the preparation and fair distribution of coffee on night watches, timely relief from deck watch, and so forth. The officers perfected an arrangement whereby salt water could be used in their shower and wash basin, thus enabling them to conform to the general plan for conserving the fresh water.

Number 126 on leaving this island where our storehouses were ran on an uncharted rock at the edge of the channel about a week after our arrival. This occurred near high tide and at low tide she made a most pitiful sight. She was perched on her side and only her after portion was in the water. On trying to get her off, matters were made worse, for she sank until only her crow's nest and mast were visible. She remained in this condition until we left.

While we remained at Bermuda the first detachment of chasers went on to the Azores and shortly we followed them. Our convoy consisted of thirty chasers, ten ocean tugs, one submarine, one battleship, one transport, and a converted yacht. The chasers sailed in formation so as to protect

the three big ships. There was a scout line of chasers flanking and astern, and behind them came the tugs. We expected to be in submarine-infested waters when we got near the Azores, and so our instructions were most explicit. We all had had plenty of liberty in Bermuda and were anxious to get at the subs, so there was much satisfaction expressed when we finally left.

This time the pitching and rolling did not affect the crews so much, and after one day out seasickness was the exception. The ground swell made things so very unstable that it was impossible to keep plates on the mess table, so only one thing was served at a time. As food was spilled frequently it became the habit to eat on deck so that the morning scrubbing down cleaned our mess table as well as topside. The variety in our menu was little changed as the volunteer cooking system was still in effect owing to the disability of our cook, for as soon as we cleared the harbor he resumed the falling sick game to our universal disgust.



## CHAPTER V

### AZORES

As the trip to the Azores was too far for us to make on our original supply of gasoline, there was a tanker along. Fueling was started about three days out, so that should we meet such weather as to prevent it we would not be caught low on gas. The system of fueling was as follows: two chasers were towed forward of the tanker's beams, riding on lines made fast to their gun mounts and keeping themselves clear of the ship's side by their rudders. Two other boats were taken on her quarters and one towed astern. The tanker kept a speed of about four knots while towing and fed the gasoline out in metal or rubber hose. There was always one unit of chasers standing by to prevent submarine attack while the others were fueling.

One afternoon a brig was seen approaching off our port bow. We had all heard stories of raiders at Bermuda, so one public-spirited commanding officer on the starboard side of the formation, with all three engines full speed ahead, charged across

to the brig and boarded her. Perhaps the captain of the brig had a good wine locker, who knows? At least this ensign found everything satisfactory and reported it so to the senior officer. It has always been a question whether the senior officer thought everything was all right though, judging from the sarcastic thanks that ensign received on reaching port for leaving position without order. The supply of oil was insufficient to meet the demands of such a long trip, so it became necessary to go alongside the transport *Bridgeport* for more. The S. C. 128 was the first boat to go on this unexpected and unpopular errand. Many and various were the questions from the ship's gold stripers as to why it was all gone, how much did we have to start with, how much left, and casually, although most important, how much did we have to have. They were most accommodating though; instead of giving us time to say how much we needed they settled it by telling us how much we would get. The chaplain of the ship gave us some prayer books, probably as we were just entering what was commonly considered the war zone, and the supply officer allowed the men to get rid of the little pay left from liberty in Bermuda at his canteen. That night a heavy wind came up and the small chasers went as far in the vertical plane as they did in the horizontal. Soon the consumed canteen supplies were seen going over the side so

that the consideration of the *Bridgeport's* canteen yeoman was not as appreciated as formerly.

The next day the handle on the adjustable rheostat on the switchboard in the engine room broke and the pin cracked. We telephoned the yacht *Wadena* for permission to come alongside for a new one, but this ship's reply to our request suggested that we use a boathook or broom handle, but naturally such suggestion was not accepted by us, and we perforce went without this part. We sailed along, however, making such repairs as we could till the twelfth day out we sighted the Azores amid great rejoicing. As we formed column to enter the harbor large crowds were seen on the shore and faint sounds of cheering were heard. We honored Ponta Delgada for an anchorage, but found berthing space very difficult to obtain on account of the immense amount of shipping that was there. Among the boats in port were the chasers which had preceded us, the U. S. S. *Maryetta*, the *Tonopah*, a monitor, and some American converted yachts. We had no more than put our lines ashore, before we were assailed by fleets of "bum boats." They had everything to sell; prices were low and the food they had was good. The island scenery here, as at Bermuda, was magnificent. Preparations were immediately made for trips ashore to see the hot springs and other sights of the island, among which not the

least of interest was the celebrated gambling club which was open to officers. While at Ponta Delgada a general overhaul was carried on and necessary repairs made. A chaser was sent out each night on patrol duty outside the harbor. One night the S. C. 127 took this occasion to demonstrate the efficiency of her Y-gun. The commanding officer explained to the crew in most technical terms the mechanism of the gun, and becoming enthused with his subject he loaded the gun. He continued his talk and explanation until suddenly attention was diverted, probably they were just coming to the mail buoy (we all like to hear from home). At any rate, when resuming the topic of the gun, demonstration became necessary, and the firing lanyard was given a smart pull. The natural result followed as when the trigger on any loaded gun is pressed. With a tremendous report and clouds of smoke the depth charges soared aloft to sink with a splash into the sea, but the rapidity of their sinking to their set depth could not match the rapidity with which the onlookers sought the furthestmost extremities of the boat lest the safety forks in these charges prove defective.

## CHAPTER VI

### GIBRALTAR

AFTER about two weeks in Ponta Delgada, all pay having been spent ashore, thirty chasers and the *Leonidas*, an old survey ship, with a tanker shoved off for Gibraltar. The *Leonidas* acted as the mother ship of these chasers now, and continued in that relationship to the end. Our trip was through the bad part of the war zone, and close watch had to be kept on the *Leonidas* for she was our bread and butter. Every floating object in the least resembling mines was to be sunk immediately by gun fire. The leaders on the scout line burned blue wake lights at night, but all others of the convoy ran "dark." In sinking floating objects the S. C. 128 fired thirteen rounds from her three-inch gun. The result was decidedly against the chaser though she hit her target, for the firing broke two windows in the chart house (they were not opened as they ran fore and aft), smashed a chest and sand locker lashed to the deck breakwater, and below in the forecastle

broke two metal bolts in the fore and aft amidships steel beam, tore out the electric alarm bell and light fixture from the overhead, and made our puppy, the ship's mascot, sick for the rest of the voyage. Without further undue incident Gibraltar was sighted on the morning of the fifth day. On drawing near, the older men who had been to sea before had the recruits all looking for the Prudential sign on the rock as proof of its being Gibraltar. Since the advertisement uses the eastern side which gives a different outline, and as no letters could be made out, the green men would not believe it to be Gibraltar until we had gotten right up to the mole. Here we found a big American naval base, and cooks were procurable who sneered at the idea of seasickness. We also took aboard stores of all kinds and were kept very busy. We met the British motor launch officers who had thrilling tales to relate of submarine encounters just outside the harbor, so that one felt sure in such an atmosphere that if he could but see through that immense rock he would discover a submarine impudently basking in the sun, or at its leisure shooting up some convoy. All the talk and thought was that of submarines, as should prevail at so important a base.

We had been in Gibraltar about five days when our chance came. One morning the signal of "submarine outside the harbor" was hoisted at

the flagstaff of the port control office. At once, the English motor launches and destroyers started out, and the chaser officers were called for a conference. It developed that a submarine discovered and bombed by aircraft had taken refuge on the bottom in a cove on the Spanish coast east of the rock. The area involved was immediately divided into sectors, one for each unit of chasers. The S. C.'s 127, 128, and 129 were given the cove itself. The officers hurried back to their ships and got under way with Captain Nelson, our commanding officer, leading on one of them. When we were off the rock we laid our course straight for our positions, and when there trailing wires were let out, to drag parallel to the coast, stopping at intervals to listen with the S. C. tubes. We continued dragging the rest of the day and listened during the night. Then the next morning dragging was resumed until 128 got contact and reported it. Turning, she went back over the spot, which had been buoyed, where she got it again. The contact was of such long duration, though broken at intervals, that permission to bomb was requested. The request was not complied with but the 127 and 129 came within hail, and on lowering their listening devices a submarine was heard under way. Trailing wires were immediately secured and a chase began. We would run for a time in unit formation in the directions from which the sub had last been

heard, then stop and listen, but the submarine zigzagged so that it was not possible to get within attacking distance. We continued the chase for two hours until it led too close to a convoy of ships for the listening gear to be of avail owing to the convoy's noise, and then the chase had to be abandoned.

This was the first experience the chasers had had with real enemy submarines, and their mistakes and their need of experience were very evident. Some of the other units of chasers obtained information when in their positions that proved to be of much assistance to the English when reported.

Shortly after returning to the harbor the chasers were made ready for their run to Malta. The officers were given the latest information and submarine problems for practice, also necessary instructions for their trip, such as Mediterranean recognition signals and allied codes. The course to Malta was laid through areas that had recently reported submarines in the hope of meeting some of them on the way. The run was to be made without stop, hence a fuel ship was taken along. Close formation was to be kept at night, but during the day units were to run out a distance of ten or fifteen miles searching for the enemy. These plans were followed out, but no signs of submarines were seen at any time during the entire run. It was an



immense relief to sail on the Mediterranean after so long an experience with the sea roll of the Atlantic. At this season of the year, in May, the waters were very smooth and there was a new moon, so that altogether this trip was most enjoyable. The only incident that marred the peacefulness was the annoying presence of porpoises. In the night a porpoise breaking the surface in this phosphorescent water so resembled the appearance of a torpedo to our high-strung imagination that there were a number of excited reports made that torpedoes were sighted coming towards us. These pet fish of the sailor were most liberally cursed.

The formation kept during this run allowed a flanking column of chasers to the *Leonidas* followed by the tanker, and then a zigzagging flanking column outside of that. Some nights, when there was no moon, it became questionable to the flanking inside chasers whether the approaching object was a chaser out of position or an enemy submarine. Very often general quarters were sounded and guns trained on one of our own sister ships, but fortunately these mistakes never were fatal. The zigzag line had no small problem to run on its zigzag out of sight of the rest and then come back again into position. It was most difficult to keep the chasers in position because of inability to hold them within ten degrees of their compass course, and also because of their variable speed owing to

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frequent engine troubles. Thus many times chasers found themselves lost as to exact position of convoy. When in such a situation it was the general rule to stop and lower the S. C. tube, which would give the bearing of the *Leonidas*, and then on returning stand by with an immediate reply to recognition demand lest they be fired on.

## CHAPTER VII

### MALTA

WE reached the island of Malta about ten o'clock one night, where the convoy laid to and turned on all lights to follow the *Leonidas* leading the way into a small cove. After traveling so many miles "dark" and for so long a time, the thirty chasers and two ships with all their lights on made us think of New York, so far off, which has its great white way so dear to sailors from everywhere. There was a chance of a submarine taking a shot at us, but we all got safely inside the cove and there anchored. It was a most dreary sight to us when the sun rose next morning, for we saw only a few ramshackle homes with no town, and that longed-for liberty did not much appeal to anyone.

While at sea it was the custom to read the coast pilot publications to learn what was of interest in the next port, but this outlook did not agree at all with the book.

The unit leaders were shortly called aboard the

mother ship, and in a little while they brought back the glad news that we were to proceed immediately to the harbor of Valetta. This turned out to be a wonderful harbor, amply fortified from the sea side with high walls or bastions running down to the water itself. The buildings and walls are all of yellow color, making everything look clean and shiny under the brilliant sunlight. We got into our dress uniforms and straightened up the appearance of our boats as we neared the entrance. The harbor was crowded with shipping, and the "bum boats" and pleasure craft flitted about mostly propelled by oars, and not infrequently just escaping collision. If a ship keeps right on its way and pays no attention to these "bum boats," the little craft will always somehow or other escape being run down. While here some of the chasers had to tie to buoys, but some were lucky enough to tie up in tiers to the quay. The sun was very powerful and we experienced our first taste of tropical climate, having had no rain since leaving Gibraltar as it was now the dry season. Liberty was granted as soon as Captain Nelson had consulted the senior Allied officer present, and as many as could went ashore.

Valetta is an up-to-date town situated on an eminence overlooking the sea. Steep walls run down to a beautifully protected harbor, which stretches way back with numerous arms. Like all

cities under British control it is neat and clean, and as orderly and well laid out as the old winding streets will allow. The palace of John Valetta, the first dignitary of the city, is the main curiosity of the place. There is a dinky railroad that runs back into the interior of the island where are the convents. The Maltese as a class are ignorant, only a very small number of the natives knowing how to read or write. A general view of the country, which has a dry brown appearance with the houses white or yellow dotting it here and there, and old buildings, and the curious dress of the peasants reminds one most strongly of pictures of the Holy Land.

While at Malta some of the chasers were sent out to meet convoys that were passing. Units were so distributed that they would convoy for fifty miles and then be relieved by another unit. While on this duty a remarkable example of the efficiency of the S. C. tubes was demonstrated. According to the story, while the 215 lay at her designated position, she heard a convoy of twelve large ships four hours before they got to her. The convoy was making around fifteen knots, and that would give the listening device a radius of sixty miles.

At six o'clock one morning we got an S. O. S. from a torpedoed ship, the *Porto Mortzo*, and the commanding officers of the chasers made ready at

once to get away. Orders were received to proceed to a certain latitude and longitude about one hundred miles in a general southwesterly direction to render any assistance possible. Three chasers cleared the harbor as 128 was throwing off her lines. On coming outside we could not see the others in any direction, so thought they had gone around the north end of the island. According to the chart the distance was about the same around the south end, so we set out by that way at full speed to try and beat them to our destination. On clearing the island, we still could not see them and feared they were too far ahead. Nevertheless we kept up the fastest speed we could maintain, and about two o'clock in the afternoon ran into wreckage. We proceeded through it, then circled, with a five-mile radius, but found no bodies nor traces of submarines. There was wreckage of all sorts, bulkheads, the wing of a bridge, beds, mattresses and numerous other pieces and articles. After a careful search, we had target practice with our three-inch machine guns and rifles on the various objects as they were passed until we came to an area covered with cases of lemons. Here we lay to, and putting over the wherry proceeded to load our decks. The sight of these lemons made us all think of Sunday-school picnics and folks at home. The wherry picked up only the choicest prizes such as fenders, boxes of soap, and other flot-

sam. The lemons were so thick in the water that the crew just leaned over the side and hauled the cases aboard. While we were enjoying these gifts of Providence, the other three chasers appeared on the horizon and shortly they were engaged in the same business as we. Number 128 picked up seventy-two cases of lemons, six cases of soap, three fenders, and many other articles. Although we had not seen a submarine, we felt we had made the trip worth while.

When we returned to Valetta we were ordered into dry dock and re-painted. About half of the chasers had already been in dry dock while we were lemon chasing, and on completion of repairs had proceeded to Corfu, Greece. As soon as the rest of us came out, we got under way with the *Leonidas* for the same port. Formation as before was kept around our mother ship, but no daily pilgrimages to the horizon were taken. About nine o'clock on the first evening out the tiller ropes of the S. C. 128 broke and we had to lay to for an hour before we could get them properly repaired. At first we were afraid to use naked lights on deck lest some neighboring submarine might want us for a souvenir, but seeing this precaution delayed work until the *Leonidas* had gotten beyond hearing of our S. C. tubes, for there were many water noises that night, we threw aside precautions and finished up the job. Water noises are those made

by the waves on the outside of the hull. When the chaser rolls, the water in the bilges between the ribs also is heard on the tubes. All the shavings were not removed when the chasers were built and in the case of S. C. 128 and S. C. 129 the drain caps in the bottom of the forward gas tanks had been overlooked, with the result that at the first filling five hundred gallons of gasoline had gone through the tanks into the bilges. This loosened the tar along the seams so that it and the shavings had clogged all limber holes under the tanks, which are set down so near the bottom of the ship that the bilges cannot be gotten at beneath them. Under average weather conditions the interference made by the bilge water can be listened through, but in a choppy sea these noises drown out further sounds. We had no sooner overtaken the convoy when the other tiller line broke, and the performance was repeated.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CORFU

FINALLY, after having sailed for two months, the coast of Greece gratified our longing eyes. It was an inspiring sight! The rugged mountains running straight down to the water's edge, sparsely covered with dark green trees, while a low-lying plateau on the southern extremity of Corfu hid its entrance behind the island. As we approached, a French patrol boat came to meet us and led us through the mysteries of the mine fields and submarine nets that lie between the island and the mainland. On turning the southern point of the island and standing to the northwest the town of Corfu could not be seen, but after an hour's run we picked up with the glass a town off our port bow and found this to be Corfu. We came to another submarine net and after passing through were right in the harbor.

As we had found the other harbors we had visited, so we found this one, crowded with shipping. There was a French fleet of big battleships, Greek

merchantmen, English trawlers and a British sloop, many Italian vessels and some nondescripts. There were no American boats to be seen. At slow speed in column formation we made our way across the harbor between Vido Island and the town. We continued past the town and wondered how far back we would have to go for liberty, when, about six miles farther, opposite a small bay, the signal was given to lay to, and the *Leonidas*, proceeding into the bay dropped anchor close to the beach. Lines were soon run to the shore and our mother ship was berthed for the remainder of the war.

We chasers were ordered to tie by units to buoys already set out, and a great rush was made for those nearest the source of our supplies. When we got tied up and the ships made secure, we found time to look around and take in the beautiful sight that presented itself.

The cove was well protected on three sides by high mountains and the fourth looked down the shore to Corfu. Beautiful green grass ran to the edge of an embankment which was about ten feet high, of rocky formation and almost perpendicular, which insured sufficient depth of water. Olive trees grew on this embankment all the way up to the hills in the background. There were no buildings except a sheep herder's hut a few yards from shore. As the cove ran inland with gentle vari-

ations of coast line one got a glimpse of a French hydro-aeroplane base. Except for these two spots there was not a mark of civilized habitation to be seen. Looking across the water in the other direction, we saw the Albanian hills, which seemed a reddish brown in the waning sunlight, standing out magnificently rugged, hard, and uncompromising. Still a milder note seemed to prevail also as one looked at the outlines which gently undulated, each top gradually meeting the other in almost perfect harmony, wave-like till lost far away in the blue of the sky.

Soon, however, our thoughts were brought back to earth by the receipt of orders for all officers to report aboard the *Leonidas*. The weather was intensely hot just now and our uniform was white trousers and blue blouses, which was followed out by such as were lucky enough to have the whites in condition. Here we met Captain Leigh and Lieutenant-Commander Spafford, who had preceded us by land and had made the preparations we found there. The situation was discussed and directions outlined at this meeting.

It was decided that a line, or barrage, of chasers was to be maintained across the Adriatic from Albania to the Italian coast, a distance of forty miles. The barrage was not on a parallel of latitude but between the nearest points, which made the line approximately on an eighty degree bearing.

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The chasers were to hold this line. To the north ten miles were English destroyers, and to the south were other British crafts such as trawlers, motor launches, and kite balloon sloops. The line was to be held by twelve chasers for four days before being relieved. As there were ten units of chasers this gave a four on, four off, four on, eight off. The barrage was to be established at once, but as a gasoline tanker had to be brought from Italy before regular operations could be maintained, it took a little time to inaugurate the line properly. Confidential information, charts, plans of mine fields, submarine net emplacements, and recognition signals were distributed to each commanding officer, who already had his safe so full of such matter that there was little space outside the ice-box and bilges for this last lot of official writing. Captain Leigh questioned the officers as to the condition of their equipment, their supplies, etc., and found the boats to be very well supplied and equipped. The *Leonidas* appeared to have on board everything that through lack of foresight or accident might be requisitioned. She seemed capable of entirely refitting the chasers and without seeming to have depleted her stores, yet she had maintained the chasers all the way over from the States. Everyone of the chaser crews is ready to take his hat off to this most efficiently managed ship.

That night tents were pitched on the adjacent neck of land for the supernumeraries of the *Leonidas*, and extensive preparations were made to establish a base. Working parties were made up to erect living quarters on shore, paths were leveled, and the lot of stores that had cluttered up the deck and every passageway of the mother ship were put on land. Captain Nelson took five chasers to Taranto, Italy, to convoy back our fuel ship. After some delay owing to a report of a suspected raid on the barrage, the captain crossed the straits and ran into Taranto harbor. A most unexpected greeting met him. An Italian ship just outside the harbor knocked off target practice to man the rails as these five little wooden affairs, with the American flag flying, passed. Aeroplanes met him and a most dare-devil exhibition of flying was staged around, between, and over the chasers' masts. To the crews viewing this it seemed the most remarkable and efficient exhibition of flying control they had ever seen.

When they came into the harbor the entire Italian fleet manned the rails and saluted them. This was the first time that the American flag had been in Taranto since the beginning of the war. They tied up alongside the British ship *Queen*, where they were royally treated, both the officers and crew. It was learned, however, that the tanker was at Augusta, and so they shoved off

after a couple of hours for Sicily. The run to Augusta was to be made at utmost speed. The night was very dark. The officers were ashamed to report when their engines had broken down, therefore, they became badly scattered. However, the next morning, since by that time each one of them had had their period of breakdown, their actual runs averaged so that they were in sight of one another. At Augusta they found the tanker ready to get under way and she was brought safely to Corfu.

Now that we had the most important factor of our work, namely, our fuel supply, Captain Nelson led out the first barrage of chasers. At two o'clock in the morning G. M. T. they got under way in column formation and proceeded out of the north end of the harbor. It was impossible to traverse the submarine nets and mine fields before daylight, but as the first streaks of dawn appeared they began making their way through these obstructions by chart. Outside the nets there were three or four miles of swept channel, but beyond that they had to take their chance. Position was taken up at noon and patrol begun. The system was to run for ten minutes towards one shore and listen for five. Distance between the chaser units was five miles, with one mile between boats. At night they lay to wherever they happened to be and put out the K tube. This listening device is a metal triangle with an ear at each vertex. Sound

is transmitted to the listener by electricity in much the same manner as in our telephone. By adjustment of movable dials the reading of two successive ears can be gotten, and these dials being graduated the bearing of the sound relative to the K tube can be read from them. The K tube has a small rudder and is attached to the chaser by wire cable, with a buoy so placed that the triangle is suspended sixty-five feet below the surface, and its bearing relative to the ship is known, as the leeway made by the drifting chaser affects the rudder.

The barrage lasted four days, and at noon of the fourth having been relieved by twelve others the start for home was made. Generally it was planned to arrive at the base before dark, for if one did not get to the nets by sundown there was nothing to do but wait until the next morning, which was a serious loss of time, owing to the fact that only three days were allowed for re-fueling, provisioning, and so on, for the next trip. The *Leonidas*, had a most efficient engine room force; night and day shifts were maintained during the entire stay at Corfu. The only thing necessary to insure always having engine parts back in time was to properly tag them. They were acquainted with the time of individual sailings or barrage work, and never in the six months that we operated from this base was the failure of a chaser being

able to get under way due to the machinist department of the mother ship.

In the way of food supplies there was a great lack when taken as a whole. For weeks milk would not be available; then sugar ran low, canned preserves, and even flour for a time was unprocurable. Meat was always obtainable from the French fleet in the harbor. Fruits varied with the seasons, and although prices were exorbitant, no complaint could be made on that point when the location and circumstances were considered.

Here six more chasers joined us the early part of July. They came from the States and convoyed the U. S. S. *Carib*, which we expected would bring supplies and luxuries, such as candy and tobacco. To our great disappointment her cargo consisted mainly of lumber and building material for the base. There was a flood of applications the days she was in port from the enlisted personnel for transfer to this ship, as it was reported she was to return to the States. Generally, attachment to a vessel of this character would have been considered a hardship; when, however, compared to the cramped crew's quarters of the chasers, with no washroom, nor room for recreation or exercise, and the necessity of being ready for call twenty-four hours of the day, and with no liberty in Corfu, this cargo ship appeared a "snap job."

About two weeks after we arrived a big draft of



men and officers came from England. These were put on shore and made to build their own lodgings. They started roads, barracks, storehouses, and erected enormous gas tanks. When any vacancy occurred in the chaser complement, these men were used to fill in. Each day schools for signals and radio were held on the beach, but during this time no liberty was granted in Corfu because of the filthy condition of the town. It was considered hard on the men, especially those who had just come in from five days on the barrage, not to be able to celebrate. Near the middle of July some Y. M. C. A. men and women showed up but their apparatus, such as movies, huts and so on, did not get there for a month.

The question of hair cuts was a big one. The unsanitary and dirty appearance of the barber shops in Corfu with their greasy attendants was not conducive to our trade. A crop of amateur barbers suddenly appeared on the chasers who came mostly from the machinist gangs, who knew much better how to handle a wrench than the small horse clippers and shears they unearthed from somewhere. From their character of scalp treatment, shaved heads became popular, as most of the crew preferred having all their hair pulled out at once to having a number of such applications all tending towards but not accomplishing the same thing.

## CHAPTER IX

### BARRAGE

ON the barrage it was first thought that the only thing necessary for sinking a submarine was just to hear him on the tubes and run over where he was and drop a bomb. Although the first couple of barrages brought in reports of possible sinkings, there was much luck attached to it. The S. C. 78 one night was lying to and a submarine was heard directly beneath her, although no sounds had been heard previous to this. The chaser immediately got under way and laid a pattern with eight bombs, when quantities of oil came to the surface, and since no more sound could be heard on the tubes, she was granted a possible sinking. Unit A followed a submarine for three hours, running at stated intervals, stopping to listen and get the bearing, which was plotted in the same manner as taught in the New London school, but each time when it was thought they were almost in attacking position, the submarine would zigzag and the chase would continue.

Before going on the barrage we had been told by a British officer who was giving us information as to their ways and methods, to always answer recognition signals immediately. "Of course," he said, "these trawlers and M. L.'s cannot hit you even though they do shoot two or three times, but on the whole, you know, it is better to answer recognition signals fast." It was either on the first or second barrage that the 94 saw a ship loom up in the darkness. Now previous to our arrival at Corfu there had been a surface raid by the Austrians, so no one thought of running a chance of allowing an enemy cruiser to be discovered lying within gunshot of him when daylight came. This ship might be either a friend or enemy, therefore the 94 flashed a recognition demand which wasn't answered immediately, so she followed this with a shot from her three-inch gun. The first shell entered the boiler room of the ship, which turned out to be English. After this incident it was very noticeable that the British did not treat the American recognition demands in the easy-going manner that they answered their own M. L.'s and trawlers.

When the chasers had been on the barrage a couple of weeks they had learned to distinguish all types of ships heard. There was one sound, however, that was continually reported and could not be accounted for. It was a tapping sound.

Many units had chased this sound with no result. One morning Unit B picked this up and signal was sent to the rest of the barrage by wireless that we were in contact with a submarine, and requesting that all ships stop. To our imagination this tapping sounded as though there was trouble in a submerged submarine that necessitated hammering. We pursued this for five or ten miles in a general northwesterly direction. When we got near the Albanian coast the chasers had gotten somewhat out of position, the center boat falling behind. We stopped our engines to get another bearing, and the tapping came from almost the center of the triangle we then formed. Signal to bomb was immediately hoisted, but before this order could be executed a black object broke the surface, running along directly for the 215. It resembled a torpedo nearly expended and the 129 fired at it, but we imagined the shot landed over the horizon. At any rate, the torpedo was safe, and then a large black tail appeared just behind this dreaded object, and we recognized the big blackfish so prevalent in these southern waters. Twice that same day this tapping resulted in our finding blackfish, so the tapping question was finally settled and the blame put on these underwater creatures.

It was the custom when at sea for the officers to stand six-hour watches. The deck force stood four on, and four off, but the radio and machinist

department and listeners were fortunate enough to be able to run four on and eight off. When on a chase general quarters were sounded, and every man on the boat had to be at his station. If the chase promised to be a long one, the cook was relieved subject to call. The chases often lasted hours making it necessary for the cook to return to the galley. Should a chase commence after one watch had been on for three and a half hours and continue until time for that watch to come on again, it was obviously unfair, and the executive officer had the problem of straightening out the difficulty. One hour was usually consumed for each meal. Between chases, regular watch system and meals, so little time was left for sleep that we were all thankful we did not have added the British tea time. When off duty, there was very little recreation at sea except cards and similar games. As the arrow used for signaling was painted red on one end and white on the other much amusement was had by the crews betting upon which color would be upward at the stop of an impartial spin. Often on moonlight nights the phonograph was brought on deck and records tried out. On hot days a few at a time were allowed to swim over side, but owing to the prevalence of sharks and the necessity of being ready for immediate action, the swimmers stayed within a few feet of the ship. When off duty another popu-

lar occupation was the scrubbing of clothes, which dried very quickly in the hot sun. In early August the temperature on deck was found to be 140°F. It was so hot below that it became the custom to wet down the decks at sunset. When in port many of the crew slept on deck under awnings, but at sea they had to go below as sleeping on deck would interfere with immediate gun action, and this could not be allowed. When in harbor three chasers were tied up to one buoy, causing a great deal of maneuvering on hot days to keep from being made the inside boat where any breeze was less felt.

There was much complaint on this barrage because the British did not observe listening periods. Neither the trawlers nor destroyers would stop their engines for five minutes, and it interfered so much with our listening that we were finally moved to a parallel of latitude south of Corfu Island. As twelve chasers were not able to cover this whole line, the result was that the submarines came down on the surface and ran around our end. Unit A had a thrilling chase of four hours after a submarine with sails. When they began to get within gunfire, the craft submerged with sails all set and was lost track of. At night this location was a most precarious one for our little boats, because convoys from the Italian coast came down to the east and passed along the line.

The chasers very much resembled submarines, and although the Italians knew we were there, they were taking no chances that objects that appeared to be American might really be Austrian. If they did not fire on us we had just as much excitement in keeping from being run down by their destroyer escort, which travels around them in circles at a speed of over thirty knots. Complaints arose again here, because of our inability to hold a line of such length, and finally the British moved us back to the parallel between Fano Island and Cape Maria de Leuca on the Italian coast. The left of the line was supported by British M. L.'s. Twelve chasers were in the center, a little over a mile apart, and on the right were British trawlers. This was the most satisfactory line we had ever had. Naturally we found fault, however, as it is not "navy" to do otherwise. In the first place, and since it was a line that was determined by latitude longitude positions, the chasers and the M. L.'s each did their separate navigating. The M. L.'s, according to the chasers, were out of position always, being either ten miles north or south; and according to the M. L.'s the chasers were just as far off theirs. The trawlers never attempted to stay in position, and admitting it there was no complaint. Then again, a submarine that came down near that position of the line where the American and British met, was pretty safe, for the

M. L.'s got under way when the Americans were trying to listen with their devices, effectually drowning all submarine sound, and the chasers, being faster and larger than the M. L.'s, would not give up the hunt to the smaller craft. However, the saving grace of this situation was that the M. L.'s, though supposed to be on a line with the chasers, were generally ten miles north or south of them, so that whoever got contact first had a pretty good chance, until they came to the other's position.

A prescribed amount of navigation had to be turned in to the mother ship after each barrage. This was checked up and showed whether or not the officers were competent to navigate their vessels on independent assignments.

The paper work on these boats was extensive. A cable was sent after each barrage to Admiral Sims in London, which comprised everything relative to the enemy that had occurred during the four days. Each chaser would submit a report generally in writing to the unit leader who would forward a unit report to the squadron commander. A listening log which included every sound heard on the tubes, a telephone log of every word sent or received, engine room reports of daily gasoline and oil consumption, number of revolutions and time of running, battery specific gravities and breakdowns, number of rounds of all ammunition



expended and how, number of depth bombs on board and expended, number of hours at sea and miles run, then the diagram of the chases participated in, and detailed report of submarines heard or seen, had to be submitted early in the morning after reaching the base. Requests for repairs, supplies, water, and provisions must be sent to the mother ship as soon as possible as we had only three full days in port.

One night the recognition signal was given to a group of M. L.'s and was answered by the wrong signal. Since target practice had been held that day, there was no particular anxiety to shoot, so, knowing them to be M. L.'s the unit of chasers came within hail. When the commanding officer of the M. L.'s was told through the megaphone that his reply was wrong, he stoutly contended that it was not, thereby making it necessary for the ships to come alongside of each other and straighten out this question. The Englishman had the correct signal for the day before, and made merely a little error in his calendar. The thing that hurt the chasers most about this incident was the discovery of the advantage that the British had in basing at a town where such a party could be celebrated as to erase one day from the calendar.

An incident that bothered the chasers a great deal occurred about three weeks after the barrage had been started. A sort of squeaking sound that

could not be identified was heard on the C tube. As the way to learn was to investigate all sounds until they could be attributed to some ship or sea creature, an H. V. (signal for all barrage to stop) was sent out and a chase of this noise was begun. It was followed as long as the barrage kept in motion, but when all boats had obeyed this signal, it mysteriously disappeared. Later on in the day another unit took up the chase of this squeaking, and for a time it was considered the hoodoo of the detachment. In one chase, however, this sound came from close aboard, and as soon as the stop signal had been countermanded, commenced again. All bearings pointed directly toward a certain British trawler, and as this trawler proceeded on its way, it followed her. On investigation of the trawler, it was found that she had a damaged screw, every revolution of which caused vibrations in the water recognized on the C tube as squeaking. Thus another unknown sound was eliminated.

Listening devices are peculiar affairs that have not yet been anywhere near perfected. One night the 215 was laying to and a destroyer was seen under way under the lee of Fano Island about five miles distant. The listener was called on deck and showed this destroyer. He went back to the magazine and reported that she could not be heard on the tubes. When the destroyer, however, was clear of the island she could be distinctly

heard and her bearings given for some time. Another incident of this sort occurred when the H. M. S. *Adamant* and three British submarines came down the barrage from windward; they could not be seen until they were within six hundred yards, but as they passed to leeward their bearings and the number of ships could be made out for half an hour. This peculiarity of the tubes is inexplicable. Official reports attributed it to aeration of the water—light and heavy spots.

While on the barrage the surface craft gave us as much bother as submarines. About two o'clock one morning B Unit heard a sound that might have been a submarine on the surface or a destroyer. The only distinguishing mark of a submarine sound is an all-metallic one. Chase was immediately taken up and a destroyer sighted. It was thought that there were other ships in company with her, and a recognition signal demand was flashed. No answer was given, however, and the 215 fired three shots. By this time they had come within near enough distance to recognize her as an Allied convoy, or perhaps neutral. From former experience with one of this sort, when asked why she did not answer the recognition signal she replied that being an Allied ship was enough without all this "other red tape," therefore it was thought unnecessary to question further. This chase had no more than been completed when a

similar sound was picked up. It was now about three-thirty in the morning, and this last ship was going along the Albanian coast standing to the northward. When the first streaks of daylight came the chasers were pretty much in formation. It was not long, however, before the center engine of the 128 ran a hot bearing and she dropped a mile astern. The bearing was cooled and she was just catching up to the 215 and 129 when an exhaust manifold was broken on the 129 necessitating her laying to for some time. There had been great rivalry between the 128 and 129 since they had been practically the only boats with a regular navy crew. As the 128 passed the 129, little sympathy was shown for her, as demonstrated by the yells and hurrahs that went up. So the 215, still leading, and the 128 now about five hundred yards astern continued the chase. The system was to run for twenty-five minutes, get a bearing of the quarry, and follow that line of bearing. At four-thirty we met a bank of mist and it was so thick we could not see fifty yards from the ship. General quarters was held going through this bank but speed was not slackened, and when the chasers finally emerged they were exactly parallel, the 128 on the 215's port beam. Here a real race began. The 215 had been recognized as the fastest ship of the fleet, and the 128 was just going to show her a stern to be followed. Everybody was

in high glee. They ran down to the engine room hatch simulating hand-shakes as congratulations to the work of the engine room force. The black gang, however, had no time for anything of this sort. They were pushing the engines to the utmost, and running double watches out of enthusiasm. Every five minutes one of them would stick his head out of the hatch for air, his eyes streaming from the intense gas below. In the chart house the wheel was given to the best steersman that no distance should be lost by undue rudder movement. One energetic engineer even went so far as to walk away up in the bow to dump oil receptacles that the ship might slide along the faster thereby. Every five minutes reports were sent down to the engine room encouraging them, for here was a chance for the 128 to show up this flagship which had such an enviable reputation. However, since our course tended to port, the 215 had to run a longer distance, being on the outside; yet she kept on the beam all the time, and we tried to fool ourselves into thinking we were keeping up with her. When the course finally straightened out, however, she began to draw away, and it was with a sigh of relief that we gave the order to abandon the chase. We were now off Brindisi, Italy, and had sent a wireless for destroyer help. These came smoking out of the harbor, and probably taking us for submarines,

came right at us. It was daylight now, so that when they were within gunshot they recognized the American flag, and we were saved the inconvenience of dodging their bullets.

It became the custom for two units of chasers to go over to Gallipoli for practice with an Italian submarine. Units B and G went over in the early part of September, relieving Units A and K. After a very stormy trip across the straits, we rounded the breakwater of Gallipoli and were met by cheers from those we were relieving. They had had very little food, no ice, and most important of all, no mail. We had all of these on board for them. Gallipoli was the first town in which the enlisted men had been allowed liberty. Here we found a traveling show of some musical comedy type that we thought far surpassed anything of that class in the United States. The acting was good and the music and singing typically Italian. Of course they could not dance, and none of us knew what the lines were. We enjoyed it, however, going two or three nights to the same show. Maybe pretty chorus girls had something to do with it. In the morning practice was held in the harbor with the Italian submarine, *Nautilus*. The first few days, the submarine's actions were restricted; she could vary from her course only so many degrees, and the chasing and plotting and sham attacks (papers were thrown over in place

of actual depth bombs) were all very successful. However, in the latter part of the training, when the submarine was allowed to go at her own discretion, the chasers learned what a small chance they really had. Were it not for the fact that the submarine had to come to the surface every twenty minutes, her crew would have been back for lunch long before us. On the fifth day out the chase had been unsuccessful; only one chaser at a time was able to hear her; this gave no fix and that bearing alone determined our advance. For two successive listening periods the 215 had been the only ship which had gotten any contact. According to her plotting, the submarine was within attacking distance and the signal, a cross, was hoisted for the wing boats to close in within one hundred yards for bombing. This was done, but the cross was not hauled down as signal to drop bombs, but one more listening period was tried to get a three-bearing fix. As the 128 reversed two engines to hold her position abeam the 215, although she still had headway on, a thump was heard under the magazine, and the engine room reported something foul of the starboard propeller. With a great hissing noise of compressed air, which shot a volume of water eight feet in the air, the submarine came to the surface directly astern of us. She had lost her periscope and conning tower and her gas fens were badly damaged. She had come up

under the 128 and the noise she was making made us all think the collision had been fatal to her. Then it occurred to us that perhaps this collision had been fatal to us, and we lost interest as to whether the submarine and its crew were going to the bottom or not. A hasty examination was made below deck but no injury could be found from the inside. Then a man was sent over the side and it was found that the blades of the starboard propeller had been either bent or torn off. Nothing more could be found out there at sea. The Lieutenant, who was in command of this training and aboard the 215, immediately had a wherry put over, and tried to appease the angry captain of the submarine, but this accident took all interest in the game out of the Italians, and they turned about and started for home, the 128 following in a dejected manner like an unwelcome visitor to a feast. When a Board of Investigation was held, it was found that slight damage had been done the chaser outside of the broken propeller, and that the watches of the submarine and of the Lieutenant did not agree by one minute. Thus an attack had been allowed to be carried on, according to the American watch, at nineteen minutes after the hour, when the submarine was supposed to come up at twenty minutes after the hour. This unfortunate happening stopped all practice of the chasers for three weeks, a course



of training that was most valuable to us at that time.

On returning to our base a new propeller was easily fitted on the shaft by the chaser running her nose up on the beach and divers going over the side, and standing on the bottom, to do their work.

During our early stay at Corfu we had been bothered by fires, owing to the inexperience of some of the engine room force. The 244 had a fire one morning owing to a backfire in her auxiliary. Fires are very serious in these gasoline ships, especially in the engine room, which is separated by a single bulkhead from six depth bombs of three hundred and fifty pounds of TNT each, and by another single bulkhead from gasoline tanks of twenty-four hundred gallons. There is so much oil and gas around that when a fire occurs the best thing to do is to leave the engine room, stuff up all ports and all but one ventilator, then pour down available chemicals through this one opening. It is a good theory, but it is very trying to stand on the topside and wait to see if the extinguisher is going to take effect. The next morning fire was started in the gasoline floating on the water alongside the same boat, and this was popularly attributed to that boat also. At ten o'clock the day after, the commanding officer of the unit to which the S. C. No. 244 belonged sent three

men to that ship armed with extinguishers and fire axes to report to the officer on duty for his "daily fire." The men were sent back to their vessel with a message to the sender to go to the farthermost regions opposite in direction to that in which the air men work.

At conferences in port after barrage, the western unit frequently reported tapping sounds that were thought to be under-water signals between submarines. These could not be exactly located as they changed position. However, the general locality was placed as off Cape Maria de Leuca on the Italian side. The shore listening station on the cape also reported them. The British told us they had heard them and previously bombed in the area with the result that no more sounds were heard. Now they had commenced again, and it was thought that they originated from a signal submarine whose duty it was to give information of the barrage to home-coming submarines. During the last week in September a unit of chasers brought in a report of bombing an area that would end the signaling submarine. According to the printed diagrams and reports they had followed the sound till a submarine was distinctly heard, then a chase of this sub. ensued. The diagram showed successive runs and stops to listen of the chasers, and the course of the sub., which was in a general northerly direction. After three or four

runs they got within attacking distance, and laid a pattern of depth charges. After this, no more sounds were heard. The submarine apparently had followed a straight course, approximately at a speed of six knots. There was diversity of opinion at the base whether this really was a submarine or a noise-making torpedo sent out to lead the chasers astray. To some it did not seem reasonable to suppose a sub. would follow a straight course when so closely pursued, especially as the barrage had been maintained long enough for submarines to learn that chasers were dangerous enough to be reckoned with.

Another time on the barrage Unit C brought in the following report. A submarine was heard, and followed to close proximity of the English trawlers, who had become very active since they received money bounty on their submarine sinkings. This unit calculating that it was within attacking distance laid a pattern of charges. The nearest trawlers, taking the cue, started dropping bombs of their own, and a seaplane which was hovering above landed in the water and signaled S. C. No. 349 to come within hail. As the chaser was making her way to the airman the commanding officer perceived a trawler off his port bow on such a course as to meet him. As the chaser had the right of way, he expected it now, but he did not get it, for straight along went the trawler

dropping his bombs, but at no set intervals—just dropping them anywhere, anyhow. As these depth charges are very powerful the commanding officer of 349 suddenly concluded it would be most prudent and much safer to get out of the way of this Englishman who was dropping bombs so promiscuously, so he gave his engines full speed astern, and was just in time, for the trawler rambling along on its way cut close across the chaser's bow, and when directly in front let go another "can." With a dull explosion off went the charge, throwing water high in the air and giving such a jar to the chaser as to threaten to break every feed pipe on board. At this the waiting aeroplane, with the whirr of a scared partridge, shot off into the air, where it remained until this energetic trawler moved on with his dangerous predilection for throwing bombs about and dealing fire and brimstone to the innocent fish. Then the airman circled, and landed within hail of the American. He told the commanding officer he had seen the submarine about six hundred yards away and pointed out its probable course. He said he would continue the search from the air, and then just as he started off in a glide something gave way among his depth charges, and overboard one of them slipped not two hundred yards from the ship. The explosion of this bomb was not very serious to the chaser as aeroplane bombs are small and not nearly

so powerful as chaser bombs; nevertheless, the humor of the afternoon's experience with this explosive was not, till long afterwards, appreciated by the chaser's crew.

## CHAPTER X

### DURAZZO

AFTER Gallipoli we made one trip on patrol on barrage and then returned to our base. We had been there but one day when word was received to stand by to get under way. Rumors began to fly thick and fast as to where we might go. Every detail that might have a bearing on our movements was carefully noted. The French fleet was getting up steam in the harbor, a thing not seen before, and then we learned that Captain Nelson, Lieutenant-Commander Bastedo, and Doctor Clemmer were to be in on the party. There was a pharmacist's mate detailed to each chaser, and it certainly began to look as though something big were to be pulled off. A message was signaled from the *Leonidas*, very urgent indeed, requesting information as to the whereabouts of Captain Nelson's wicker chair. Special gangs of machinists were sent aboard to see that all was in readiness in that department. After the customary four hours of standing by, that always precedes

an important order to get under way in the navy, twelve of us steamed out of the harbor in column. It was now nine o'clock at night and ordinarily the nets would be closed to passage at such an hour. None of us except Captain Nelson and perhaps Mr. Bastedo, neither of whom were communicative, knew where we were bound. We followed the Albanian coast to Strata Bianca and then set our course generally northwest. The first intimation most of us had of our destination was the instructions on formations on entering the port of Brindisi, Italy. Why we went there, what we had come for, or how long our stay might be was still a mystery. As we made our way through the outer harbor at about four o'clock in the afternoon of September 30th, we saw a great number of Italian battleships and British destroyers that did not seem to have been anchored for a long period. Most of them lay to with one anchor, or were made fast to buoys. In the inner harbor, was immense masses of Allied shipping, but prominent among all were the big Italian cruisers. We now knew something big was up. When we tied up in tiers to the quay, no one was allowed to go ashore, and even the officers were forbidden to communicate with anyone, special guards being posted on the dock to see that this order was strictly observed. That evening the commanding officers were called aboard the No. 95, and were told the object

of our trip—a raid on Durazzo. During the following day we did nothing but sleep, and at night we overhauled the entire battery. The engine room force, since they could work out of sight of those on shore, were able to overhaul their machines during daylight. That consumed one day, and the next night all officers assembled on an English ship for detailed instruction. The plan was to have the Italian light cruisers and the English and Italian armored cruisers bombard the port of Durazzo in two divisions; the armored cruisers bombarding first, the light cruisers afterwards. They were all to be escorted by English destroyers, and the chasers were to act as submarine screens. Unit B was to lay to the north of the bombarding sector; Unit G between the sector and the harbor itself; with another unit southward and one to the westward. At five o'clock in the morning aeroplanes were to start bombarding the town. They were to fly from the Italian coast, drop their bombs and return, continuing this as long as effective. At two o'clock G. M. T. in the morning of October 2d, although some had thought the time to be local and had arisen two hours before, we left Brindisi and set our course to Durazzo. That is, twelve chasers were supposed to be in this detachment, but when we got into the outer harbor, by telephone we found that the 244 had fouled her pro-



pellers in wire alongside the dock when about to shove off, and would be unable to extricate herself in time to join us. About ten o'clock we arrived at our position off Durazzo. At the sight of us a couple of small torpedo boats started out of the harbor, but seeing the smoke from the cruiser fleet which now appeared on the horizon, they hurried back. The arrival of the chasers and the fleet had been timed exactly, so that we separated and got to our designated positions as the armored cruisers went into their bombarding sector. They ran along their sector sending salvo after salvo, which both sank the shipping in the harbor and destroyed the buildings in the town. Clouds of smoke and fire were seen as the shipping was destroyed and the houses burned and crumbled.

As soon as the cruisers had started firing the forts on shore opened up with a great roar, and we could see big splashes of flame along the cliffs over the sandy shore. The airplanes were doing remarkably effective bombing, and we were watching the fight with lots of interest, zigzagging along our patrol. While the armored cruisers were bombarding, the light cruisers stood to the northward along the coast and past us as though they meant to proceed against Catarro, an Austrian and German submarine base. One of their escorting destroyers ran in near the beach, and swinging her stern around let go a shot at the forts. Then,

putting their helms hard over the big ships swung around to go on to their bombarding sector. At this maneuver the northern forts opened up, and shells fell around us. We little chaser men were greatly thrilled and were as proud as could be, for we thought at the time the Austrians considered us of enough importance to send nine-inch shells at us. We ignored the fact that it was the cruisers beyond that warranted the whistle and dull splash of these big projectiles. The expression of our elation over our own imagined importance was suddenly interrupted by a report of the S. C. 129 that there was a submarine off our port bow.

The 129 was the last boat in our unit and set off after the submarine she saw, just as our leader the 215 and we saw another. These subs. when the light cruisers had started north had evidently set out after them, and when they turned back to the southward they had stuck their periscopes up to see what was going on. They did not seem to pay the least attention to us, but had their eyes on the bigger game.

The second shot from the 215's three-inch gun hit the periscope of the second submarine about 750 yards away and a big column of water and compressed air shot up six feet from the surface. The submarine kept going, however, as such a shot does not put them out of business. The escaping air from the periscope left a trail on the water and

128, maneuvering to the starboard side of the 215, got him right between us (we were now one hundred yards apart), and we let go fourteen bombs with the result that up came pieces of the underwater craft. We did not stop to pick up evidence, however, as a third submarine was then reported by 129. Meanwhile 129 had set off to intercept the sub. she saw 1600 yards distant. The periscope had not been seen for about a minute, which is a long time under such circumstances, when the executive officer stepped on the whistle, which is a signal to drop a depth charge. At the explosion of this charge, up came both periscopes of the submarine to see what had so jarred its peaceful progress. This gave the submarine's exact bearing to the chaser, and although the bomb had crippled the chaser's engine, in this condition she kept going and was able to intercept the course of the U boat, where she let go enough depth charges to entirely destroy the submarine.

This last bombing, however, put all her engines out of order, and she had to lay to temporarily. By this time the destroyers had sighted the third submarine, and began firing at her, so we little chasers thought it better to get out of their way if any of us expected shore liberty that night.

A hospital ship, *The Baron Call*, that had come out of the harbor was trying to run away, and we had orders to take her, but we saw a submarine

about three quarters of a mile off. We immediately went after this one, which was probably the sub. that had torpedoed the *Weymouth*, but she had learned her lesson, and submerging as soon as she sighted us, we could not find her. We did not spend much time searching because we were afraid the runaway hospital ship might escape. As we started for the runaway the shore batteries began dropping shells around her, but by the time we got to her she was out of range, and so a destroyer put a boarding party on board and then we all escorted her back to the port of Brindisi, but just outside the harbor orders were received to let her go.

It was at this fight we first saw the Italian speed boats, and they were wonderful. They ran right through the shells dropping thickly all around them into the harbor, shot off their torpedoes at the shipping there, and then at great speed turned about and ran out again. Everything in the harbor seemed to have been destroyed. A couple of Austrian destroyers started out, but, bang! and down they sank. One salvo from the cruisers hit a big merchantman, which had started out, but in thirty seconds there was absolutely nothing of her left.

There was a good record made by the other units of chasers in this fight. They did not see any submarines so could not sink them, but they

guarded the larger ships from mines, and were credited with saving some individual ships in engagement.

The 130, which belonged to the unit directly under Captain Nelson's command, and was stationed between the bombarding sector and the shore, the position the most dangerous yet the most promising for excitement, showed itself to be typically American by eleventh-hour success. During the bombardment some mines became loose, and these were sighted by the 130 directly in the path of British destroyers which were racing about the larger ships. There was no time for telephones or flag signals, for the destroyers were almost on them. Order to fire at the nearest mine six hundred yards away was given. The elements were unfavorable, the little boat bobbed up and down, jumping from crest to trough of the long swells, while the mine would show up for a moment on the top of a wave and disappear. Immediately following the order came the 3" report. A great volume of water shot into the air as the mine was exploded dead ahead of the onrushing ships. Never slackening her speed, the little chaser continued on her course towards this evident mine field to head off the destroyers and lay to between the ships and the nearest mines. At the explosion of the mine caused by the 3" shell, with a swish of white water from their

sterns the destroyers put their wheels hard over and sheered clear, thus narrowly missing their doom.

This unit was so placed that shots from the forts fell around them and the Allied salvos went over their heads. It was a decidedly ticklish position.

Although there was a good bit of firing on the part of the Austrians, they did not seem to be able to do any harm to the attacking force, which seems almost incredible seeing how much they fired upon us. Our Allied navy seemed and proved to be very superior to the enemy, but leaving out the element of surprise, the forts should have registered some damage with their shells. Speaking from personal observation, there seemed to be a complete absence of fear displayed by any of the chasers' crews, who were so interested in at last getting a bit of the fight they had looked forward to ever since they enlisted, that there was no chance for nervousness at the shells and mines that strewed the area. To be sure, after the demonstration, when one considered the number of nine-inch shells fired and number of mines the location of which we did not know, it seems miraculous that no ship was swamped, if not hit or blown to flinders. It was a gay night at Brindisi on our return, and then came the order to go back to our base at Corfu.

Of such value were the chasers considered that the Italian government, while it gave its silver medal to Captain Nelson and Lieutenant Bastedo and the three commanders of the chasers in Unit B, gave bronze medals to the commanders of Unit G.

The translation of the Italian notification letter reads as follows:

Commando in Capo Dell'Amata,  
Oravale E Del Basso Adriatico,  
Brindisi, 8 November, 1918.

No. 41

To CAPTAIN C. O. NELSON, U. S. NAVY,  
Commander of the U. S. S. C. Flotilla.

I am pleased to communicate to your honor that on account of the brilliant action at Durazzo of October 2, 1918, and after my suggestion, the silver military medal for valor has been conferred upon your honor and the following U. S. Naval Officers.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER PAUL H. BASTEDO, U. S. Navy.

LIEUTENANT W. AUGUSTUS OTT, U. S. NAVY.

ENSIGN MACLEAR JACOBY, U. S. Navy.

ENSIGN HILARY RANALD CHAMBERS, JR.,  
U. S. Navy.

The bronze military medal for valor has been conferred upon the following:

ENSIGN GEORGE J. LEOVY, U. S. Navy.

ENSIGN ERSKINE HAZARD, U. S. Navy.

ENSIGN JOHN MOORE BEVERLY, U. S. Navy.

On this occasion I express to your honor my greatest pleasure for the well deserved honor, and for the good work carried on in the Adriatic.

With my highest consideration, and best regards,

I remain yours

(S.) CUSANTI VISCONTI,

Vice Admiral,

Commander-in-Chief.

Shortly after the raid on Durazzo, twelve chasers under command of Captain Nelson set out for another raid on the enemy's post. These chasers were of those left behind on the former occasion, that all the boats might have a chance. These two divisions were doomed to disappointment, however, for on arriving at Durazzo it was found that the Allied army had taken the town. The chasers now were used as protection from sea attack while troops were landed, but no enemy appeared to dispute Allied authority, and in a disappointed and dejected frame of mind the boats returned to the base.



## CHAPTER XI

### ARMISTICE

THE barrage was very mild after Durazzo and time dragged most heavily, as subs. were seldom heard and more seldom seen.

At length rumors were rife that Austria had followed Bulgaria in asking an armistice, and when word was received November 5th that she had given up the fight, there was great rejoicing. The news was first received by wireless on the mother ship, which sent out the following signal to the chasers: "Armistice has been signed between the Allies and Austria-Hungary. Do not sink any more enemy submarines." This signal sounded as though it had been our custom when in a bad mood to run out in the straits before breakfast, sink a couple of subs., then come back and eat. It was a beautifully worded message, and gave a most fitting finish to our Adriatic endeavors. With the receipt of this signal all chasers and the *Leonidas* blew their whistles until air was exhausted. Few lunched that day as all cooks were

up on deck rejoicing with the rest of the crew. Armistice night we had a glorious shore liberty in Corfu, where we met some of the Jugo-Slavs who had come down under the white flag to arrange surrender details. These men were representatives of that faction of the Austrian navy which, being Slavic, had mutinied and succeeded in destroying the efficiency of the Dual Monarchy's sea forces.

The day after the news of the armistice with Austria was received a national salute was given to the French fleet which was in the harbor of Corfu. Twenty-one chasers in column formation wound its way among the anchored ships, and on passing the flagship each fired the propulsion charge of its Y gun. Grease was put in each barrel of the gun to make smoke rings. It was a very novel though not noisy way of acknowledging respect for our Allies. The French replied in customary fashion, and we heard played for the first time since we had come to Corfu, for we had had no time during the war to make up a band, the glorious old *Star-Spangled Banner*.

I had been relieved of command of 128 and made executive officer of the 215, which was the flagship of Unit B and under command of Lieutenant Ott. It now became my duty to receive, and try to be pleasant to, all the officials who honored us with visits of investigation for information and just idle curiosity. Of course, all the Americans came to

give us their best wishes and congratulations, and the natives and foreigners as well, who were there, treated us handsomely and with a great deal of respect. It was not strange nor infrequent to see an ensign hobnobbing with a naval officer of many stripes.

It was now rumored that we would proceed to England since Germany was still game. The chasers were made ready for sea and preparations for abandoning our base were begun. On November 11th came word that Germany too had signed the armistice.

The chasers being the only ships under the American flag in the Adriatic it was thought necessary to send them into every port of any importance. At the signing of the armistice the Italians sent ships and men all along the eastern coast of the Adriatic. The Jugo-Slavs were resentful at this landing of troops and there were frequent outbreaks of hostility, for they were aware of the rumored treaty between England, France, and Italy to give Italy the Dalmatian Islands and other desired portions of the eastern coast of the Adriatic as compensation for entering the war on the side of the Allies.

Since the Jugo's were basing their hopes for their future on President Wilson's idea of self-determination, the presence of the American flag even though on a 110-footer was able to quiet things down.

Three chasers entered the harbor of Roga Znica at night shortly after the armistice. The channel being tortuous and unmarked, considerable attention was attracted by their searchlights and the noise of their engines. On approaching the wharf it was found the townspeople had assembled there in an attitude of antagonism. When lines were put ashore they were immediately thrown off, and even guns were pointed at the boats, till suddenly a searchlight discovered to the townsfolk the American flag; at once, the attitude of the people changed. Their welcome equaled their former displeasure. A torchlight procession was formed and the officers were escorted through the town walking between the Mayor and Chief Priest. Two small boys preceded them bearing torches with the townsfolk following. The women leaned from the windows and threw flowers on them. The choicest wine cellars were opened for their benefit and a most royal welcome was given. The first unwelcome exhibition was explained to the Americans by their boats being taken for Italian.

After leaving Corfu the main body of chasers and the *Leonidas* went to Catarro as temporary base. This is a very beautiful harbor half way up the east side of the Adriatic. There are three immense harbors one behind the other and protected from the sea by high mountains that leave but a narrow entrance to the first of these. At

Catarro are enormous submarine machine shops. The chasers made for these the first chance they got and loaded up with tools both useful and useless. There were many souvenirs to be gotten, such as pistols, rifles, and other army and navy equipment, for much had been abandoned by the Germans at the signing of the armistice. Horses were running about with no one to claim them and these were about the only souvenirs the chaser men did not take.

The navy predisposition to take everything not fastened down, whether useful or not, became rampant. The S. C. 130 seems to have been the first boat to discover the largest machine shop and ammunition depot of the Germans in the harbor. On tying up to the wharf Jugo-Slav soldiers were seen on guard. A scholar of the black gang force went ashore to try out the German he had learnt ten years before at the Podunk high school. We were all watching from the chaser and saw him wander up to the guard and offer him a cigarette and a light. He held a few minutes' conversation apparently in the sign language, then pulling three or four cigarettes from his pocket he gave them to him. The guard, taking these, immediately unbuckled his ammunition belt and handed it to the sailor together with his rifle, then sauntered off, while the machinist brought back to the chaser his trophies of war, to the great interest of all. This

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performance was encouragement enough. The Jugo-Slav officer in charge was invited aboard for lunch, where he had sugar, coffee, potatoes, and white bread and butter for the first time in three years he said. It was a very short time before all the crazy wild men on the boat started out for souvenirs.

The officer, to show his appreciation for our supplying him with the first square meal since the beginning of the war, not only gave our men free access to everything on the base, but judging from the captain's sign language that he desired a gun larger than a rifle, sent five of his men over a nearby hill for it. Soon these men reappeared dragging a field piece with mount and fittings big enough to sink the chaser. They seemed much disappointed that this cannon would not do and hurried off and brought back a number of machine guns, which were gladly accepted. The officers now had to keep careful watch that the enthusiastic sailormen as souvenir hunters did not sneak on board with loaded hand grenades, for there were plenty of them lying about. When officers of the new state would come aboard it was the custom to exchange little gifts as proof of good feeling. They would give us swords, pistols, or the iron crosses that were issued by the Emperor Charles, and the Americans in return would present them with pictures of New York or, what was most cherished by these

Jugo-Slavs, photographs of President Wilson. The Wilson electioneering buttons were most sought after. The Reserve officers, now that the uniform was changed, would give the discarded collar insignia of the force; these the Jugo-Slav officers would proudly sew on the lapels of their coats and then parade through the town with their new decoration.

All the boats drew a good two feet more water when they left with their spoils. Jugo-Slavs had taken over the big Austrian battleships, and it was very pleasant to go aboard these for dinner, as the supply of food on the ships was really larger than our own. Since we had been away from the shipping lanes our food variety had been small. The poverty of the inhabitants on shore was pitiful, however. In many cases a family of five or six, children and old people, as the young men had been forced to war, would own but a single chicken. They would have a small and poor-looking garden and they themselves were dressed in the scantest of old garments.

From Catarro we went to Spalato, Dalmatia, which is famous for its maraschino. This town had not felt to a big extent the more cruel side of the war. It is back from the main coast line, and is principally a trade port. Here I had the good fortune to attend the first concert ever held there at which the Jugo-Slavs were allowed to use their own

language throughout. It seems incredible that in this enlightened age such a ban should have been put on so harmless a thing. The audience was of course Slavic, and was very well dressed. The evening dress of the women made one think of New York's theater district, but to hear their talk one thought of Ellis Island.

In the harbor were two battleships, *Zerini* and *Radetsky*, which we had taken over, and tried to man with men from our base at Corfu. Many amusing incidents occurred, as a large part of both men and officers had never been on a big ship before.



## CHAPTER XII

### ATHENS

FROM Spalato Unit B was sent to Athens, the port being Piræus. We were to demonstrate the efficiency of the chasers to the Greek government with the idea of making a sale. A few days later we were joined by three others, bringing orders for the six chasers to assist the American Red Cross commission at Athens in distributing food and clothing to the starving inhabitants of the neighboring islands. Lieutenant Ott was the senior officer of this division and coöperated with the Red Cross in transporting supplies and personnel to Kavalla, Salonica, and the Ægean Islands.

During our stay in Piræus, the young King of Greece made us a visit, and a pleasant fellow he is as far as we could judge. The embassies invited us to all their functions, and we drank tea with the highest social folks in Athens. We talked English whenever we could, and spoke French very slowly, very indistinctly, very softly, and speaking personally, very ungrammatically and incorrectly.

Our sojourn was made most pleasant by the arrival of mail, but no paymaster. December 23d we were in port, and intercepted a wireless from the rest of the detachment, to Malta, ordering four thousand pounds of turkey for Christmas dinner. We, however, passed the day the same as any other with crackers, canned "bill," and potatoes. How we cursed our luck can be imagined.

While at Athens we enjoyed the visiting around in the cafés as much as our limited knowledge of the language allowed. We were always certain to find company at any hour in these Grecian gossiping places. Here we saw more culture and refinement than in any other city. To us Americans, however, it seemed, when we thought about it or discussed the city among ourselves, that there was very much more talk than task among our friends. They have a clean, beautifully laid-out city, almost prehistoric ruins, and most pleasant manners, but their business methods were distinctly Oriental. Perhaps they seemed lazy because of the climate; anyhow, the only real big business we saw was the trade in tobacco. We ran across some of the tobacco buyers for American firms, and they surely did have an interesting lot of things to tell us, but, best of all, they could tell us in English. What we here in America call Turkish tobacco is handled by these buyers in Greece. We gathered that there is a strong monarchist or royalist sentiment among

these café-visiting Greeks, but judging from personal observation, the grand old man of Greece, Venizelos, seems to be strongly intrenched politically, and republican sentiment growing very fast.

After Athens, we went to Constantinople to receive the pay long due us and to turn over bills incurred in Greece into more competent hands than our own.

On the first of January the main detachment of chasers started on a voyage from Malta along the coast of Italy, making a trip to Rome and the French coast. They reported a splendid time, an audience with the Pope, and receptions galore. Our half dozen boats loafed about towards the East, and although there were receptions enough they were not so grand as the European crowd attended. We were satisfied though as the views we had were of the more unusual, and the places we visited were of the most out of the way, and consequently most interesting. While at the island of Kios one of the crew bought or stole or had given him a small donkey, which the crew claimed as mascot, and which was kept on deck as it was the only place for it. He afforded much amusement to us all when anyone passed behind him. The men usually managed to inveigle strangers into this position, and when the donkey tried to make a field goal it was fun for all but the unsuspecting stranger.

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We sent some of the boats with Red Cross officials to Italy. There was not a great deal of use made of us, however, in this Red Cross assignment. It was extremely pleasant for us officers to meet some of the fine officers of this organization, both men and women, as we had not seen any Americans for nearly a year. It was after war had stopped, and these folks had time to visit a little. About the middle of February we reached Constantinople in our pilgrimages through these Eastern waters. In running through the Dardanelles we saw many wrecks of the British ships that had remained where they had been sunk or stranded in 1915, when the English attempted to force their way through to Constantinople. We anchored off the Sultan's palace, and our experience there with the Turks was anything but agreeable. One night we counted ten shootings from a rifle or revolver in an hour in the Stamboul quarter. It was not dangerous to go up to the bazaar in the daytime, but at night, unless well-armed, it was foolhardy. It was not that the American uniform instigated attack, but rather general conditions of anarchy. In Pera and Galata law and order were usually observed, and foreigners were not molested any more than were the natives. But it is not conducive to peace and comfort to feel that there is a possibility of one stopping a bullet which either was or was not intended.

What pay was received soon flew away here, but American yachts and destroyers were in the harbor, and hence the base of supplies nearer than it had been for a long time. Saint Sophia and other points of interest were inspected and criticized. The French-speaking guide, in the pursuit of his business, called attention to the likeness of Christ in the dome of the church by stating he was "one of the big prophets of the Greek church." This guide surely was a good Mohammedan. Silks and laces in the bazaar bothered Reserve ensign purchasers. It was nerve-racking to make sure you were not being cheated in buying an article at one tenth the original asking price. Besides, neither at Annapolis, the Cloyne school, nor at mess on board the big ships with the four stripers was any instruction given as to silks and laces and embroideries. A pair of field glasses was easy, but the silk and lace thingumajigs bothered considerably.

Fifteen months' life on a 110-foot chaser never caused the least nervous twinge, but the big ship coming home through the mine fields made one look out carefully and breathe more regularly as each night was passed that carried one nearer the swept areas and the most cherished statue in the world.

THE END















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